
OLR Bill Analysis

HB 6457 (as amended by House “A” and “B”)*

AN ACT CONCERNING THE DISPLAY OF THE STATE OR NATIONAL FLAG AT HALF-STAFF.

SUMMARY:

This bill conforms state law to federal law by authorizing the governor to issue a proclamation ordering the national flag to be flown at half-staff following the death of a (1) present or former principal figure of state government or (2) member of the armed forces who is from Connecticut and dies in the line of duty. When the governor issues such a proclamation, the state flag must also be flown at half-staff.

The bill also authorizes the governor to issue a proclamation ordering that the state flag alone be flown at half-staff following the death of a state official or prominent citizen.

After the governor issues either type of proclamation, the bill requires all state government buildings and offices, public schools, and military bases to fly the national and state flags in accordance with the order.

Current law requires the governor to order that the national flag be flown at half-staff after he orders that the state flag be flown at half-staff following the death of an armed forces member who dies in the line of duty.

The bill defines “armed forces” as the U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Air Force, or any reserve component thereof, including the Connecticut National Guard. The bill does not define “principal figure of state government” or “state official or prominent citizen.”

Current law prohibits towns, cemetery associations, or ecclesiastical societies that care for cemeteries from enacting bylaws that restrict U.S. flags' display at veterans' graves from the Saturday before Memorial Day until the Monday following the 4th of July. The bill extends this period by one day, beginning it on the Friday before Memorial day.

*House Amendment "A" changed "celebrity" to "prominent citizen," clarifying for whom the governor can order the state flag alone be flown at half-staff.

*House Amendment "B" extends the period in which U.S. flags' display at veterans' graves is protected by beginning the period one day earlier.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage, except the provision concerning U.S. flags displayed at veterans' graves is effective October 1, 2013.

BACKGROUND

The federal Flag Code codifies rules and customs for the display and care of the U.S. flag. Among other things, the code authorizes U.S. governors to issue proclamations ordering that the national flag be flown at half-staff following the death of a (1) present or former state government official or (2) state armed forces member who dies in the line of duty. After a governor issues such a proclamation, each federal installation or facility should fly its national flag at half-staff. No state or local flag may be flown higher than the national flag, so when the national flag is flown at half-staff, so should state and local flags (4 USC § 7).

COMMITTEE ACTION

Veterans' Affairs Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 13 Nay 0 (03/07/2013)